

# FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

## Information Service

VOL. IV—No. 12

AUGUST 17, 1928

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Published by-weekly by the FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION, 18 East 41st Street, New York, N. Y. JAMES G. McDONALD, *Chairman*; RAYMOND LESLIE BUELL, *Research Director*; WILLIAM T. STONE, *Editor*. *Research Assistants*: HERBERT W. BRIGGS, DOROTHY M. HILL, E. P. MACCALLUM, HELEN H. MOORHEAD, M. S. WERTHEIMER, AGNES S. WADDELL. Subscription Rates: \$5.00 per year; to F. P. A. members \$3.00; single copies 25c.

### Obstacles to Balkan Cooperation

WHEN M. Eleutherios Venizelos, the veteran Greek statesman, returned from his self-imposed retirement in the Island of Crete and assumed the Premiership of Greece early last month, the Balkan countries awaited his pronouncement of Greek foreign policy with special interest. Press reports state that at a reception in his honor in Salonika he outlined this policy, foreshadowing friendly agreements with Turkey, Bulgaria and Jugoslavia to supplement the Graeco-Rumanian pact signed last March, and stressing the importance of establishing really cordial relationships with all the countries of the Balkan peninsula.

This attitude is consistent with the policy adopted seventeen years ago by M. Venizelos in the days before the Balkan Wars and the Great War, and is also in keeping with the desires and the public pronouncements of several Balkan leaders. During the past year there have been many evidences of a desire on the part of Greeks, Bulgarians, Yugoslavs and Rumanians to rid the Balkan peninsula of the recurrent alarms which have made it the storm-center of modern Europe. The desire for stability and secur-

ity has found frequent expression at conferences of one sort or another where delegates of two or more Balkan countries have met to discuss their common economic or educational and cultural interests. Even the celebration of purely national anniversaries has sometimes given rise to expressions of desire for friendly cooperation in the Balkans. A short time ago Yugoslavs observed the fifth anniversary of the assassination of a Bulgarian premier with memorial gatherings and numerous evidences of a desire to enter into closer relationship with their eastern neighbor.

The prompt aid given to earthquake sufferers in Greece and Bulgaria by neighboring countries in April and May, 1928 had the effect of increasing mutual friendliness to an appreciable extent. Press dispatches, meanwhile, have devoted considerable attention to the idea of "a Balkan Locarno," whose outlines may be vague enough, but whose primary purpose—that of creating a more friendly atmosphere in the Balkan peninsula—is unmistakably clear. Talk of a "Balkan Locarno," a Balkan customs union, or even of a Balkan federation,

has often been heard. Press representatives, lecturers, students, statesmen and others have repeatedly urged some such measure as a panacea for Balkan ills, while periodic visits of Balkan Ministers to Geneva, or widely-reported speeches of Balkan politicians in their own countries have given rise to the belief in some quarters that attempts to establish a new era of Balkan cooperation were actually under way.

The world has received such reports with mixed feelings. They have seemed oftener to be the fiction of anxious imaginations than the natural result of actual international developments in the Balkans. Stories of raids, harsh notes, assassinations, persecutions of minorities and mutual threats have been given more credence, if only because of their greater frequency. And yet, in spite of the skepticism which has greeted occasional accounts of special efforts to inaugurate a new era, it has been generally recognized that the very prevalence of strife in the Balkans is of itself sufficient motivation for an actual quest for Balkan reconciliation.

#### **SUCCESS OF BALKAN LEAGUE IN 1912**

Since the hold of the Ottoman Empire on Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria was broken in the nineteenth century, there have been several occasions when Balkan cooperation has been a familiar theme. But the last occasion on which the governments of the Balkan countries actually succeeded in sinking their individual ambitions for the sake of cooperating toward achievement of a common ideal was in the year 1912. At that time Montenegro, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria joined in an attack on Turkey in the hope of wresting from it a portion of the territory that was still left to the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The first results of this concerted action were successful beyond their highest expectations. Turkey, weakened by its war with Italy in the previous year, was driven back to a position southeast of the Enos-Midia line. It lost all of its European territory but the city of Constantinople, the Gallipoli Peninsula and a small triangular area beyond. The loss was far from inconsiderable. Albania and Epirus on the Adri-

atic coast, Macedonia and Western Thrace on the northern shore of the Aegean Sea and a long corridor between Serbia and Montenegro extending up to the very border of Bosnia had been detached from the Ottoman Empire. The total area of the territories won by the Balkan States was greater than that of the State of New York. For a moment the victors had the opportunity to establish stable governments in these areas in place of the reign of terror from which it had been the alleged purpose of the Balkan allies to free them. The Balkan League appeared already to have justified its existence in a peculiarly happy manner.

#### **DISPUTE OVER MACEDONIA PROVOKES WAR IN 1913**

But the League was as short-lived as its original successes were brilliant. It failed to survive the first crisis which arose over division of the spoils of war. Serbia, unexpectedly cut off from the Adriatic by the creation of an independent Albania by the Powers, demanded compensation, asking for part of the Macedonian territories on the Aegean which Bulgaria had intended to annex. Bulgaria refused to make any concession of the sort desired by Serbia and attempted instead to enlarge its own holdings at the expense of both Greece and Serbia. When war thus broke out among the former allies, Turkey seized the opportunity to recover Adrianople. Rumania also joined in the fray, hoping to snatch from Bulgaria the southern Dobrudja, which lay temptingly beyond the great bend of the Danube so easily within Rumania's reach.

The Second Balkan War of 1913 which thus broke out sounded a death knell to the hopes of the statesmen who had looked forward to a permanent Balkan League capable of protecting individual Balkan states from outside aggression. The spirit of Balkan cooperation was choked out by renewed rivalries and hatreds which flared up during the Second Balkan War, and found an even more passionate expression during the World War. Bulgaria, defeated in 1913 by Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Rumania, threw in its lot with the Central Powers in 1915 in the hope of revenging itself upon its enemies. The event at first seemed to justify Bul-

garia's policy. Bulgarian, Austrian and German troops swept across Serbia in the fall of 1915, and held that country in complete subjection. Austria and Germany dominated the Balkans, holding Montenegro and Albania as well as Serbia. Rumania did not enter the war until 1916. By Christmas of 1916 Bulgarian and Austro-German troops occupied Bucharest and all but the whole of Rumania's territory. If Greece could have been treated similarly, Bulgaria's program would have been complete. And indeed Bulgarian troops were working down through Macedonia toward Greece. But after a time the tide turned against Bulgaria. The Austro-German troops which had participated in the conquest of Serbia and Rumania were withdrawn, and in September, 1918, the British, French, Italian, Serbian and Greek troops concentrated at Salonika grew active. The Bulgarian forces, put on the defensive, collapsed. King Ferdinand abdicated, and simultaneously with the accession of his son, Boris, there came into power an anti-militaristic Agrarian and Socialist government under Premier Stambulisky, which devoted itself first of all to the punishment of the Bulgarian leaders whom they blamed for Bulgaria's entry into the war.<sup>1</sup>

The appearance in Bulgaria of a non-expansionist government came too late to save the country from the consequences of its recent military expeditions into the territories of its neighbors, for the latter saw to it that terms of peace imposed upon Bulgaria were not easy.

#### PEACE TREATY IMPOSES HEAVY TERMS ON BULGARIA

Since one of the many important elements in the present Balkan situation is the attitude of Bulgaria toward its neighbors, and since the attitude of Bulgaria toward its neighbors is constantly affected, even today, by the terms of the peace treaty, some attention is due to the provisions of the latter.

"In settling the terms of the Treaty," a British historian states, "the most important consideration in the mind of the Conference

was the future maintenance of peace in the Balkans. For this purpose it was necessary that Bulgaria should pay damages, and stiff damages, for her action in the war. Her recent history proves conclusively that it was essential to teach her a stern lesson as to the penalties inevitable upon aggression. But at the same time the burden had to be adjusted so as not to make it crushing, and the machinery of payment had to be so arranged as to avoid all opportunities for friction among neighbors, whose national animosities are quick to burst into flame, to whom war had become almost a normal condition, and for whom indeed, in days not very remote, peace had been only an informal kind of war."<sup>2</sup>

It thus appears that it was in a mood of high moral indignation, tempered by at least an appeal to prudence, that the victors imposed the Treaty of Neuilly on Bulgaria. Be this as it may, the Allied and Associated Powers succeeded in placing Bulgaria in a position of extreme weakness. The latter had to pay 2,250,000,000 gold francs (\$450,000,000) of reparations,<sup>3</sup> and submit to the partial financial control of an Inter-Allied Reparation Commission. It had to restore to Rumania, Yugoslavia and Greece livestock that had been removed during the occupation, and compensate Serbian coal-miners by delivering to Yugoslavia 50,000 tons of coal per annum for a period of five years. It had to reduce its armed forces to 33,000 men, including police, local militia and frontier guards, although its population was still over five million. The minimum term of military service was to be twelve years—a stipulation designed to prevent a large military reserve from being built up in the course of a few years. Bulgaria's dreams of territorial expansion, moreover, were rudely shattered. Rumania received the Dobrudja, while Serbia and Greece both acquired territory which Bulgaria wished to retain. The most serious territorial loss to Bulgaria was involved in the award of Western Thrace to Greece—a territory across which Bulgarian trade would naturally have passed on its way to the Mediterranean had Bulgaria succeeded

2. Temperley, H. W. V., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. Vol. V, p. 40.

3. The payment of this sum was to be regarded as only partial reparation. It was far from sufficient to cover the damage done by Bulgarian troops in Serbia, Rumania and Macedonia.

1. Hayes, Carlton J. H., *A Political and Social History of Modern Europe*. Vol. II, Chap. XXXI.



Prepared by the Foreign Policy Association

### POST-WAR MAP OF THE BALKANS

in consolidating the gains it had made in the first Balkan war.<sup>4</sup>

A British history of the Peace Conference explains the thwarting of Bulgaria's chief desire—the desire for free access to Aegean ports—in the following manner:

"The Bulgarian people had demonstrated the

need for precaution against their ambitions for Balkan hegemony, and their innate capacity for aggression and national revenge. The Peace Conference held, in consequence, that it was imperatively necessary to cover the supremely important position of Constantinople and the Straits against future ambitious movements from the Northwest and at the same time diminish the strategic importance of Bulgaria. . . . Greece appeared to be a possible warden, marked out

4. See Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *The Treaties of Peace, 1919-1923*. Vol. II, p. 653, ff.

for the duty by her geographical position, by the considerable Greek element in the population of Eastern Thrace, and by her political sympathies with her Western Allies.”<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, Greece now holds the entire Aegean coast up to the Maritsa River, where it meets Turkey on the east, while the Serbia of 1911, united with territories four times its own size to form Yugoslavia, has also been cut off by Greece from access to the Aegean.

The agreements upon which the Balkan League based its existence in 1912 have disappeared. The new territorial disposition of the Balkans does not correspond with the plan the Balkan States evolved for themselves before the outbreak of hostilities. Has violation of the agreements of sixteen years ago made it impossible for the Balkan States to arrive at a new agreement? Are the new Balkan states any more capable of sustained effort toward collaboration than were their predecessors in 1912? What issues have been raised by the redistribution of territory? And is the attitude of other European countries a hindrance or a help to Balkan unity?

#### **REDISTRIBUTION OF TERRITORY RAISES NEW PROBLEMS**

The chief issues raised by the redistribution of territory in the Balkans are in part economic, in part ethnic. Perhaps the chief economic difficulty involved in the post-war settlement has been concerned with the distribution of seaports. Greece, in this respect, fared more fortunately than any of its neighbors. Endowed already with numerous harbors, owing to the nature of its own coast-line, Greece acquired several additional ports in its new provinces of Western Thrace and Macedonia. Dede Agatch and Kavalla, directly south of Bulgaria, are not as famous harbors as many that Greece already possessed, but their geographical situation gave them a peculiar importance in the eyes of Bulgarian merchants and statesmen. To the Greeks Salonika, on the Macedonian coast directly south of Yugoslavia, seemed a much greater prize, since it had direct railway connections with seven countries of Europe and since under the

Turks its harbor and trade had been more fully developed than those of Kavalla and Dede Agatch. Finally, it must be remembered that, until the collapse of the Greek expansionist movement in Anatolia in the autumn of 1922, Greece held Smyrna on the coast of Asia Minor and almost all of Eastern Thrace in addition to Macedonia and Western Thrace—a circumstance which gave it temporary possession of ports on the Black Sea as well as on the eastern and western shores of the Aegean.

#### **GREECE AND JUGOSLAVIA RECEIVE LARGE TERRITORIAL AWARDS**

Greece won this territory not because it needed new harbors, not because of racial affinity with the majority of the inhabitants of Eastern and Western Thrace, and not because of assistance given to the Allied cause throughout the Great War. None of these considerations could be advanced in explanation of the territorial award. Greece already had plenty of harbors. The inhabitants of Thrace had sprung from numerous stocks, and the only safe generalization to make concerning them was that the majority were Mohammedans. King Constantine, finally, had prevented Greece from according that consistent support to the Allied cause which Premier Venizelos, even in neutrality, had wished to give. After Venizelos' dismissal in April, 1915, Greece had shown symptoms of defection to the side of the Central Powers. Thus, Greece did not take a thoroughly active part in the war until July, 1918, when some 250,000 Greek troops started out with the Allied forces on the final Macedonian campaign which ended in the defeat of Bulgaria. This eleventh-hour participation seemed scarcely sufficient of itself to warrant a tripling of the size of Greek territories by the Allies, especially when it is remembered that Italy, which had broken off friendly relations with the Central Powers and had been fighting against them ever since May, 1915, received relatively little territorial compensation.

The explanation of the Allies' action in awarding the Aegean coastal regions to Greece is to be found rather in their determination to prevent a recurrence of the Teu-

5. Temperley, *Op. Cit.*, Vol. IV, p. 457.

tonic "*Drang nach Osten*." Never again should Germany and Austria succeed in building up for themselves a bridge of friendly or subservient states across which they might fling their railroads, their corporations, and their influence into Asia. Bulgaria must be humiliated and reduced, and cut off from Turkey, which also had lent itself to German ambition. Greece might be counted on to oppose any attempt to reconstruct the Teutonic bridge. So, also, might the Serbs, the Croats and Slovenes, who had united to form a single state, effectively cutting off Austria and Hungary from the Adriatic. Thus, both Greece and Yugoslavia had benefitted by the Allies' desire to place innumerable obstacles between the Central Powers and the objects of their former ambition.

#### BULGARIAN EFFORTS TO SECURE AN AEGEAN PORT

The Aegean Sea, however, continued to be the normal trade outlet for a large part of the territory south of the Danube, including portions of both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The Allies recognized this fundamental geographical fact when they promised Bulgaria that, in spite of the Treaty of Neuilly, special facilities would in course of time be provided for transporting Bulgarian goods across Greek territory to the Aegean. On the strength of this promise Bulgaria demanded at the Lausanne Conference (1922-1923) that it be given outright possession of an Aegean port and of a railway corridor leading to it. Failing this, it asked that such a port and railway corridor should at least be granted an autonomous régime subject to Bulgarian influence. But Greece refused to meet Bulgaria's wishes. It offered at most to set aside an Aegean port under international control which Bulgaria might utilize, or to establish a separate Bulgarian Free Zone in the port of Salonika. Bulgaria regarded neither suggestion as a proper fulfilment of the undertaking of the Allies, and refused them both, awaiting a more opportune occasion on which to reopen the question, chafing, meanwhile, under its disappointment. An indication that the present Greek Government recognizes the importance of settling outstanding Bulgarian claims was given by M. Venizelos, the Greek

Premier, during the recent Salonika reception to which reference has already been made. He did not suggest, however, that Greece was willing to give Bulgaria anything more than the free and full use of the railway.

#### NEED OF AN AEGEAN PORT FOR JUGOSLAVIA

Yugoslavia, which in the nature of the case was on more friendly terms with Greece, fared little better than Bulgaria in the matter of an Aegean port. It is true that with the inclusion of Montenegro in the Serb, Croat and Slovene Kingdom<sup>6</sup> the latter controlled a coast-line of a hundred potential harbors on the Adriatic, from Cattaro on the south to Susak, a suburb of Fiume, on the north. But only five seaport towns as yet actually exist (Ragusa, Spalato, Sebenico, and the two just mentioned) and of these none are properly constructed to handle a large volume of trade. Neither are they adequately served by railways.

As the crow flies, the distance from Belgrade to its closest port, Cattaro, is only three-fifths as great as the distances from Belgrade to Salonika. But to reach Cattaro from Belgrade by rail one must go around three sides of a great rectangle—a journey which is much longer than the direct trip to Salonika. At present Salonika, in Greek territory, is thus a more advantageous outlet for a large part of Yugoslav exports than any of its own harbors.

An observer has summed up the situation tersely in the following words:

"The Yugoslav territory was supplied with less than 7,000 kilometers (4,300 miles) normal gauge railway lines, all in very bad shape as a result of the war, and divided into three distinct and uncoordinated systems—that of pre-war Serbia, and the Hungarian and Austrian systems, both tending northward, the one toward Budapest, the other toward Vienna. There was no east-and-west main line, adapted to the needs of the new geography. The Serbian railways were linked up with the other two systems by just one single-track line, running the forty-three kilometers (27 miles) from Indjia to Belgrade. Over this solitary pair of rails had to

6. There are Montenegrins who contend that the Podgoritsa Assembly which declared for unification with Yugoslavia was irregularly elected and that legally Montenegro is still an independent state. In practice, however, it is treated as an integral portion of Yugoslavia, sending deputies to the Skupshina at Belgrade.

pass all the through traffic between western and southeastern Europe—the traffic from Paris and Berlin to Constantinople and Salonika—with the result that Yugoslav domestic business was often crowded out or delayed. The Paris-Trieste-Bucharest route also passes through Yugoslav territory. But though all these main channels of European trade cross Yugoslav territory, they neither begin nor end in Yugoslavia, so that the country's foreign commerce had everywhere to submit to the interference of a third party and run the risk of discrimination and delay.”<sup>7</sup>

To rectify this situation the Yugoslav Government in April, 1928, discussed with a consortium of British and American banks a project for the construction of a modern port at Cattaro and a direct railway line linking the latter with Belgrade. But at best this project can hardly become a reality for a number of years. And Yugoslavia will always need an outlet on the Aegean as long as it wishes to participate in the commerce of the Eastern Mediterranean.

#### GREECE CREATES JUGOSLAV FREE ZONE

Before the Second Balkan War, Greece had already promised Serbia special privileges at the port of Salonika. These promises were not at once fulfilled. Yugoslavia pressed its case upon the Greek Government in 1923, when the latter was preoccupied with the momentous difficulties which faced it after the collapse of its Anatolian campaign. The Athens authorities agreed to permit the erection of a Yugoslav Free Zone in the port of Salonika. But it was not until March, 1925, that the promise was actually put into effect.

The arrangement was far from satisfactory to the Yugoslavs. They complained particularly that the zone allotted to them was already too small to handle Yugoslav trade, although that trade was bound to increase in future, while their own zone was prevented from expansion by the fact that the Greek Free Zone immediately surrounded it. These difficulties, they affirmed, were increased by the alleged mismanagement of the Greek section of the railway connecting Belgrade with Yugoslavia. Conditions on this Ghevgeli-Salonika line were such that Yugoslav imports were piling up in the Salonika warehouses.

By announcing the abrogation of an expired Graeco-Serb treaty of alliance, the Yugoslav Government succeeded in getting the Greek Government to discuss the mutual relations of the two countries, and the whole Salonika question was aired once more. On August 17, 1926, a new agreement was arrived at, which provided for the enlargement of the Yugoslav Free Zone and for the appointment of a French Commissar to enjoy certain rights in relation to the administration of the Ghevgeli-Salonika railway.

The agreement, negotiated during the dictatorship of General Pangalos, was repudiated by the Greek Government shortly after a *coup d'etat* in Athens which put an end to General Pangalos' career. In 1927 the Greek parliament also denounced the proposed commercial agreement as entailing far too great concessions to Yugoslavia. Yugoslav rights in the port of Salonika remain, in consequence, practically the same as they were in 1925, and the administration of the Ghevgeli-Salonika railway is still a source of irritation to Yugoslavs.

#### COMMERCIAL ADVANTAGES IN COOPERATION FOR GREECE

Greece is fully conscious of the advantage it possesses in its northern harbors. By careful management it may succeed in building up in Salonika a flourishing transit trade, making it the point of transshipment for an important part of Europe's exports to the Orient. But this can be done only if Salonika can succeed in meeting future competition from Constantinople and Adriatic ports—a thing it cannot hope to do if it alienates the interests of its neighbors, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

The refugee populations which poured into Greece from Asia Minor after the Anatolian disaster have already contributed to an important revival of commerce in Thrace and Macedonia, but this purely Greek trade is insufficient to satisfy the hopes of those who assume that if their government would enter into some form of closer cooperative agreements with their northern neighbors, untold benefit would accrue to Greece as a result of the diversion through Salonika of a substantial part of Europe's exports to Asia.

7. Armstrong, Hamilton Fish. *The New Balkans*, p. 62-3.

If, as a result of the post-war territorial settlement, trade outlets, railway management and customs barriers have been subjects of diplomatic discussion and misunderstanding in the Balkans, still more anxious attention has had to be given to a series of ethnic questions arising out of that settlement, because of the violence and bloodshed which have kept such issues almost constantly before the public eye.

#### **PARTITIONING OF MACEDONIA CREATES FRICTION**

The most prominent among these issues are those which make up the complex Macedonian question. At least a few of its main features should be considered.

Macedonia was partitioned by the peace treaties among Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece. To the majority of Macedonians themselves this disposition of their relatively small territory was more than distasteful, since there existed among them strong independence and autonomist movements. Bulgarians remembered that Macedonia had formed part of the Bulgarian Empire of the Middle Ages. Not unmindful of the advantages that an extension of their own influence might bring, they were disposed to support plans for the establishment of a unified, autonomous Macedonia, dependent upon Bulgaria for guarantees of its territorial integrity and bound to Bulgaria by ties of the closest friendship and gratitude. Macedonians in Bulgarian territory thus considered themselves relatively fortunate and looked upon their brothers in Greek and Yugoslav territory as victims of the high policies of the Allies, talking of the day when their subservience to Athens and Belgrade should be brought to an end.

At the close of the Balkan Wars there had been a certain movement of Macedonians into areas allotted to Bulgaria and away from the territory just acquired by Serbia. When by the Treaty of Neuilly Bulgaria was forced after the Great War to cede to Yugoslavia a portion of the territory in which these Macedonians had settled, the latter felt impelled to move a second time, and settled just within the Bulgarian boundary again, to form there a nucleus of émigrés whose

chief desire was to secure the liberation of the kinsmen they had left behind them in their original homes. Divided as they were, and lacking outstanding leaders, Macedonians seemed to have no chance whatever of gaining their end. But bands of so-called comitadjis, espousing the revolutionist cause, engaged in a series of raids and acts of violence and succeeded at least in keeping their discontent before the attention of Balkan governments and of Europe as a whole.

#### **JUGOSLAVIA, GREECE AND RUMANIA PROTEST MACEDONIAN RAIDS**

The well-known friendliness of Bulgaria to the Macedonian cause made it natural that comitadjis expelled from Yugoslav or Greek Macedonia for their violent deeds should settle down in southwestern Bulgaria as close to their former homes as possible, beside the other Macedonian émigrés. This region soon became a hot-bed of Macedonian intrigue, and raids by comitadji bands across the border were not infrequent. On June 14, 1922, the governments of Yugoslavia, Greece and Rumania, each of which had its own reasons for wishing to keep Bulgaria in a submissive mood, addressed a joint note to the Sofia authorities on the subject of these incursions. Bulgaria, interpreting this joint note as a threat against itself, appealed to the League of Nations for support, asserting that the reduction of its army to a force of only 33,000 men under the terms of the Treaty of Neuilly made it extremely difficult to curb banditry on the borders.

The incident was soon closed, but the fundamental difficulty remained. The Yugoslav Government, refusing the claim of many Yugoslav Macedonians that they were of Bulgarian origin, imposed upon them a strictly Yugoslav régime. Macedonian revolutionaries complained that the Yugoslav Government was violating both the letter and spirit of the Minorities Treaty and accused it of wanton cruelty toward their confrères in southern Yugoslavia. They charged, moreover, that the Greek Government had seized upon the excuse of the overwhelming immigration from Asia Minor after the victory of the Turks over the Greeks at Smyrna to eject Bulgarians forcibly from Greek

Macedonia as well as from Thrace. Here again, as in the case of Yugoslavia, charges of extraordinary cruelty were laid against the local authorities, and Greece was repeatedly reminded by the Bulgarian press of its international undertakings to respect the rights of its minority populations.

#### GRAECO-BULGARIAN DISPUTE SETTLED BY LEAGUE

The question of Graeco-Bulgarian relations continued to be so difficult that it was made the subject of a League report in March, 1925. Unfortunate incidents continued to be reported. On October 19, 1925, there occurred a spectacular violation of the Graeco-Bulgarian boundary and the two countries seemed on the verge of war. At the suggestion of the Bulgarian Government, the Council of the League of Nations intervened. M. Briand telegraphed requesting that troops be withdrawn from the frontier and that hostilities be suspended until a Commission of Inquiry should have time to investigate the cause of the disturbance. This quick action prevented war. The Commission absolved both Greeks and Bulgarians from the imputation of a premeditated attack, but Greece was forced to pay Bulgaria a sum of approximately \$125,000 in reparation for material and moral damages.

In July, 1926, Bulgaria was once again implicated in difficulties on its border. A Yugoslav village was attacked by a band of comitadjis believed to have come from Bulgaria. Again Greece and Rumania associated themselves with Yugoslavia in the note of protest that was addressed to Sofia. Again Bulgaria pleaded the hampering effects of the Treaty of Neuilly. But this time bitter resentment was felt in Bulgaria against Greece and Rumania for having joined with the injured party in the note of protest. No one had forgotten that Greece had been named the offender in the Graeco-Bulgarian boundary affair of less than a year before, and Rumania had only recently been accused of putting to death unjustly some forty-five Bulgarians in the Dobrudja—the Alsace-Lorraine of Bulgaria and Rumania. Bulgaria suspected that Greece and Rumania, as well as Yugoslavia, were assuming the rôle of champions of righteousness at this particular moment with the ulterior

purpose of securing representation, with none too friendly intent, on the League's prospective commission for administering a Bulgarian refugee loan.

In September and October, 1927, there was a fresh outbreak of comitadji activity in Yugoslavia, culminating in the assassination of a noted Serbian general. Yugoslavia closed its boundary against Bulgarians. Suggestions of a conference between Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria to discuss the Macedonian question went unheeded.

In 1928 there were fresh incidents. In February four Serbian peasants were reported to have been killed by Macedonians. In July a Macedonian revolutionary made an attempt on the life of the chief of the Yugoslav police, who had been engaged in suppressing comitadji activities near the Bulgarian border. In the same month it was reported in a Belgrade dispatch that nine Serbians had been burned to death by a notorious bandit identified with the Macedonian revolutionary committee.

#### MACEDONIAN OPINION SHARPLY DIVIDED TODAY

Within the revolutionary organization itself, however, there was occurring a serious upheaval. On July 8, General Protogeroff, one of the chief Macedonian revolutionary leaders, was assassinated by his own followers because of recent indications he had given of favoring a *rapprochement* between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.<sup>8</sup> A week later a second Macedonian leader was assassinated, the victim on this occasion being the alleged instigator of the crime against General Protogeroff. It thus appeared that Macedonian opinion was sharply divided in face of the indications of growing friendliness between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, certain groups being inclined to accept the situation while others saw in it only the death-blow to their hopes of establishing a united Macedonia.

Macedonian revolutionaries have defended the violent activities of their comitadjis in Yugoslavia on the ground that it is the only method available for punishing Yugoslavs for their alleged inhuman treatment of

8. The change in General Protogeroff's views is reported in the press to have been due almost entirely to his gratitude to Yugoslavia for prompt aid given to his people after the Bulgarian earthquakes in April.

Macedonian minorities. In a statement submitted to a Congress of League of Nations Societies at the Hague on July 1, 1928, a group of Macedonians in North America<sup>9</sup> submitted a memorandum in which detailed accounts are given of twenty-seven assassinations of Macedonians by Yugoslav agents during the seven months prior to May 22, 1928. It is charged that in no case were the Yugoslav perpetrators of these crimes brought to justice. This memorandum and previous memoranda issued by the same body cite methods of persecution used by Greek as well as by Yugoslav authorities against Macedonian minorities, and complain that existing conditions make life unbearable for the latter.

The Bulgarian Government, which from time to time has counted among its members persons of Macedonian birth and strong Macedonian sympathies, has repeatedly declared its anxiety to put a stop to comitadji activities. Yet it has seemingly been unable to fulfill its purpose, whether from an actual lack of troops and gendarmes or because of a prevailing sympathy for Macedonian aspirations among its general population.

#### OTHER BALKAN MINORITY PROBLEMS

The Macedonian question is only one of several minority problems which are still acutely felt because of the comparative recency of frontier changes. Rumania and Yugoslavia, dividing the Banat of Temesvar between them, have a host of difficulties to solve in that fertile and populous basin, where Rumans and Serbs are closely intermingled and important economic readjustments are still to be made. Mention has already been made of bloodshed occurring in the Dobrudja, another area of mixed population which Rumania acquired during the Second Balkan War. As Macedonians complain of their treatment at the hands of the Yugoslav and Greek Governments, so do Bulgarians complain of alleged suppression at the hands of the Rumanian authorities. Greece and Albania, and Albania and Yugoslavia also have mutual irredentist problems.

9. The Macedonian Political Organizations of the United States and Canada hold annual meetings in North America for the purpose of protesting against treatment of Macedonians in Yugoslavia and Greece.

In fact, no country in the Balkans is free from irritations on this account. The process of post-war adjustment has only barely begun, and the discomforts of that process appear to be uppermost in the minds of all border populations in the Balkans.

The suggestion has frequently been made that Balkan differences might be settled by a series of bilateral treaties designed to eliminate specific causes of friction between pairs of states. Not all observers agree, however, that this method would guarantee Balkan security. One such observer writes:

"... Such is the complex nature of Balkan relations and of the various Balkan problems that it seems impossible for any two countries to conclude a separate treaty without making it appear to be directed against a third. A Greek-Yugoslav treaty would appear to be directed against Bulgaria, with whom the two countries have a common quarrel over the minorities; a Yugoslav-Bulgarian treaty would seem to threaten Greece, with whom the two other countries have a contest over Aegean outlets; and so on. It is worthy of note that the more frequent advocacy of a Bulgarian-Yugoslav union has roused in the Rumanian press the fear of a new Slav danger; and it is even more significant that the articles in question at once found a sympathetic echo in Athens. The upshot was the broaching of conversations for a Rumanian-Greek alliance. In short, everyone, so to speak, has a quarrel with everybody else, and the compounding of one quarrel is promptly taken to mean that the two parties want a free hand, or want to join hands, for handling more forcibly their quarrels with a third party. It is a very peculiar state of things in which any separate agreement, though perhaps useful and innocent in itself, seems predestined to be countered with a less useful and innocent agreement between the parties outside of it, or at least to rouse them to deep suspicion; and either of these effects must be a fresh obstacle to the setting up in the Balkans of a general Locarno system for the peaceful settlement of disputes."<sup>10</sup>

#### EFFECTS OF EUROPEAN- BALKAN ALLIANCES

If comments of this nature have been made to illustrate the difficulty of basing security on a series of bilateral treaties within the Balkans themselves, the disturbing effect of the occasional conclusion of bilateral treaties between Balkan countries and other European countries have been even more re-

10. Mitrany, D., *The Possibility of a Balkan Locarno*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. (International Conciliation, April, 1927, No. 229, p. 170-171.)

marked. It has long been the fate of Balkan countries to suffer peculiarly from the ambitions of outside nations in the past, and today there is still a fear lest outside interference may prevent consistent development of Balkan cooperation.

In the first decade of the twentieth century it was the ambitions of Russia and Austria-Hungary which weighed upon the Balkans, in combination with the Ottoman policy of provoking local and regional dissensions for the enhancement of Turkish power. But today the situation is entirely changed. Turkish territory in the Balkan peninsula is even smaller than that of Albania. Austria and Hungary are prevented by their own relative weakness and by the existence of the Little Entente from resuming their former expansionist policy in the peninsula. If Russia's immediate territorial ambitions appear to include recovery of Bessarabia from Rumania, they still cannot be said to affect the alignment of Balkan States to an extent comparable with that of the pre-war period. Italy, on the other hand, has leaped to a position of new prominence in the Balkans, so that no Balkan state has been able to leave out of its calculations the possible effects of Italian policy on its own future.

#### JUGOSLAVIA AND ITALY COMPETE IN ADRIATIC

Thus when Italy concluded a pact of friendship and cordial collaboration with Rumania in September, 1926, Yugoslavia took up the cry once more of "The Balkans for the Balkan peoples." Italian agreements with Greece and Bulgaria gave Yugoslavia a sense of unfriendly encirclement which even its own treaty of friendship and the arbitration convention with France (November 11, 1927) did not dispel.

Jugoslavia, indeed, has appeared to be almost obsessed with fears of its western neighbor, with whom it has been engaged in a bitter and unequal competition for domination of the Adriatic. Italy entered the competition with many advantages on its side, such as the possession of an established commerce, with new footholds on the eastern shore of the Adriatic at Saseno and Zara, and at the northern end of the sea at

Trieste. Yet it early showed a disposition to better the provisions of the treaties. It seized and kept Fiume (September, 1923). It also seized, and showed some intention of keeping, the Greek Island of Corfu just below the entrance to the Adriatic (August, 1923). That the combined influence of the Conference of Ambassadors and the League of Nations prevented Italy from retaining Corfu did not lessen the fear of Yugoslavia that it was the intention of Italy actually to make of the Adriatic what it had often been called, an Italian lake, guarded by a circle of Italian naval bases.<sup>11</sup>

#### ITALY THE CHAMPION OF ALBANIA

Jugoslavia was disturbed most of all, however, by its firm conviction that to round out its existing advantages Italy was set upon acquiring Albania, and upon building up a system of Balkan alliances for the encirclement and ultimate undoing of Yugoslavia. There were several considerations which seemed to support this view. It appeared to have been only President Wilson's influence and the existence of a strong nationalist movement in Albania which prevented a mandate over that "rock garden of Europe" from falling to the share of Italy after the Great War. Moreover, Italian forces had been withdrawn from Albania only with reluctance and after it had been decided to establish the latter as an independent state. The Island of Saseno, just beyond the Albanian port of Valona, was still an Italian naval base. Again, although Albania was a full-fledged member of the League of Nations, it was known that the Conference of Ambassadors, in November, 1921, had placed in the hands of Italy a peculiar hold upon that small nation by providing that in case Albania should ever appeal to the League of Nations for assistance in preserving its territorial integrity, the League representatives of the British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan should recommend that the task of championing the Albanian cause should be entrusted to Italy.

Still more disturbing to Yugoslavia was the Italo-Albanian Pact of Tirana of Novem-

<sup>11</sup>. Cf. F. P. A. *Information Service*, Vol. III, No. 1, "Italian Foreign and Colonial Policy."

ber, 1926, whereby Italy placed itself at the disposal of the Albanian Government to preserve not only the juridical and territorial *status quo* in Albania, but also the political *status quo*—an engagement whose immediate significance lay in the fact that Ahmed Zogu Bey, President of Albania, was believed to be in danger of attack by anti-Italian elements in Albania.

#### **FRENCH-JUGOSLAV TREATY COUNTERED BY ITALY**

Jugoslavia was all the more perturbed by these developments inasmuch as it had not always had the appearance of being entirely free itself from territorial ambitions affecting northern Albania. Seven months after the publication of the Tirana Pact, when Jugoslavia found occasion to break off diplomatic relations with Albania (June, 1927), Italy charged that the Belgrade authorities intended a military *coup* on the Albanian border. There were rumors of impending war. Jugoslavia asked for an international inspection of its borders to prove that it had not been mobilizing there. Feeling was intense. A proposed conference between Italy and Jugoslavia failed to be held because of Mussolini's declaration that the Tirana Pact could not be made a subject of discussion at any such gathering. Five months later, in November, 1927, Jugoslavia announced that it had concluded a new treaty with Italy's rival, France.<sup>12</sup> Within two weeks Mussolini countered with the announcement of a new twenty-year military alliance between Italy and Albania. In the battle of diplomacy Italy appeared to have the advantage over Jugoslavia as far as a direct increase of influence in the Adriatic was concerned.

#### **RENEWAL OF NETTUNO CONVENTIONS OPPOSED**

The unfriendly spirit which marked the relations of Jugoslavia and Italy accorded ill with the Italo-Jugoslav treaty of friendship and cordial cooperation of January, 1924. That pact had been negotiated at a time when the veteran Yugoslav statesman, M. Pashitch, had hoped to inject a more friendly spirit into Italo-Jugoslav relations.

But he had failed to carry with him the inhabitants of the Dalmatian coast, whose dislike of Italy and whose fear of its ambitions were marked. Thus he had been unable before he died to secure ratification of a series of technical agreements (known collectively as the Nettuno Conventions) necessitated by the geographical juxtaposition of Jugoslavia and Italy since the Great War and the intermingling of their respective populations. So violent was the antipathy toward Italy of Jugoslavs on the Dalmatian coast and elsewhere that when it was learned in May, 1928, that the Yugoslav Government intended once more to submit the Nettuno Conventions to Parliament for ratification, anti-Italian rioting occurred in the coast towns and in the capital and public opinion was so inflamed that the proposed debate on ratification had to be postponed. Inhabitants of the Dalmatian coast, whose antipathy towards Italians had been increased by the protracted disputes concerning the location of the Italo-Jugoslav boundary, saw in the proposed conventions an instrument which would permit thorough Italian penetration of the northeastern shores of the Adriatic by Italians, inasmuch as one of their provisions would rescind the regulation which still prevents Italians from acquiring land within thirty miles of the sea-coast.

#### **RADITCH, CROATIAN SEPARATIST LEADER, ASSASSINATED**

But the Yugoslav-Italian friendship pact was about to expire on July 28, 1928, and unless the Nettuno Conventions were ratified before that date there was danger that Italy might refuse to renew the friendship pact itself—a refusal which could only have grave consequences for Jugoslavia. The Yugoslav Government, accordingly, kept up its effort to secure ratification. On June 20, 1928, after Stefan Raditch, the Croatian separatist leader, had attacked the government in violent terms for its decision to submit the Nettuno Conventions for ratification, a tragic incident occurred. M. Raditch had expressed the opinion that if the Yugoslav Government had due regard for the interests of Croatia it would not press for the ratification of these conventions. He had charged the Belgrade Government with having acted as though Jugoslavia had no inter-

<sup>12</sup>. The treaty of friendship and the arbitration convention of November, 1927, referred to above.

ests but the interests of Serbia. M. Pernar, another member of the opposition, continued the attack. Angered by the violence of M. Pernar's manner, a Montenegrin deputy shot at him and wounded him. He then fired a shot at Stefan Raditch, inflicting a serious wound, which resulted in his death on August 8. Immediately afterward he killed two other deputies who came to M. Raditch's defense, one of them being the latter's own nephew, Paul Raditch. Three more deputies were wounded before the Montenegrin had emptied his revolver.

With two of their deputies slain, and their leader, Stefan Raditch, in a hospital, Croatians began to show an ugly temper. They refused to accept the letter of condolence sent them by the government, rejected offers of financial assistance for the families of the murdered deputies, and demanded that the government resign and that radical changes be effected in Yugoslav traditions of government. The incident was a painful illustration not only of the lack of real cohesion in the Triune Kingdom, but also of the unsettling effect upon domestic affairs of the existing international situation. Even after Koroshetz, the Slovenian champion of decentralization, accepted the premiership late in July, 1928, Croatian deputies remained aloof from the Skupshtina, or Belgrade parliament, assembling instead at Zagreb as an evidence of the intensity of the bitterness caused throughout Croatia by the Yugoslav Government's Italian policy.

#### SUMMARY

Even a brief review of the Balkan situation thus gives the impression of continual uncertainty. And the domestic difficulties of Balkan governments serve only to heighten this impression. Yugoslavia has been practically without a government for over a month. The unity of Serbs, Croats

and Slovenes has seriously been called in question. The loyalty of Croats to the person of King Alexander may not be sufficient to preserve the unity of the state without serious alterations in its constitution. In Albania the subservience of the President, Ahmed Zogu Bey, to Italy has won him a secure position hitherto, but elements in that small state which are opposed to Italian domination of Albania have not given up all hope of a sudden and radical change. In Greece the transition from a monarchical to a republican form of government, coupled with the rapidity with which various parties have succeeded each other in controlling the government, has made it extremely difficult for the country to maintain a sense of direction. It has submitted in turn to dictatorships and revolutions. Whether the return of M. Venizelos, about whose name so many traditions cling, will be sufficient to restore a sense of direction, time and the forthcoming elections alone can tell. Bulgaria is still absorbed with the problem of settling its refugee populations. Rumania is torn by dissensions between Liberals and the National Peasant Party, and its government is suffering from such intrigues as usually occur under a regency.

Throughout the Balkans there is thus a sense of double insecurity—the insecurity caused by unfortunate domestic difficulties and the insecurity caused by the actual or potential unfriendliness of neighboring powers. Thus it is that the various elements in the Balkan peninsula which are seeking a new security are trying for the most part to avoid the reopening of boundary issues, attempting rather to secure the moral acceptance of the territorial settlement of the peace treaties and to reduce specific causes of mutual irritation by specific agreements between the individual countries affected.

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